

girls like eleven hopper don't go to prom (and other misconceptions of by ess writes

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Summary: tw for underage drinking. years after mike wheeler and jane "eleven" hopper's friendship takes a turn for the worse, the two reunite at hawkins high senior prom. fluff and angst all wrapped into 1300 words.

1. mike

fandom: stranger things

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summary: years after mike wheeler and jane "eleven" hopper's friendship takes a turn for the worse, the two reunite at hawkins high senior prom.

author's note: tw for underage drinking. this is loosely based on a plot developed by myself and the infinitely lovely and forever talented harveen. she's been such a great mike to my el and i love her x200 for inspiring me to write this lil piece. also i'm posting without much proofreading because i can't stand rereading my work, ever. enjoy! xx

"do it you fucker" – harveen when i told her i had to write this damn fic

Mike is not sure why he agreed to attend his senior prom.

Yes, he managed to score a date (the cute junior transfer from Indianapolis actually *liked* awkwardly tall audiovisual nerds) and yes, Karen Wheeler would have thrown a certified fit if she wasn't able to photograph her only son before the night began, so those two reasons sort of sold Mike on purchasing his ticket. Plus, The Party always agreed to either a) boycott the prom by hosting an at-home, infinitely dorky Anti-Hawkins-Prom-Slash-Dungeons-and-Dragons Party, or b) go as a group; if one member of the party was in attendance, they'd all find a way to go, and considering Lucas and Max were attached at the hip, there was no way the other four gentlemen could back out.

So it seemed Mike's mind was made up *for* him, before he considered the obnoxious photo ops to which his mother would subject him, or that *Sloane Sullivan* had *agreed* to accompanying him, despite having known him for a mere nine weeks (they got along decently well in advanced calculus; she laughed at his lame math puns and that alone was grounds for a solid acquaintanceship). His friends give him shit when he strolls into the unrecognizable gymnasium at Hawkins High School; Student Council *truly* outdid themselves, Mike decides, as he observes the decorations, dance floor, and dinner tables.

He strolls in, arm in arm with his date, when he spots her. It's not the sort of sighting that would stop him dead in his tracks; it's not as though Eleven pushed through the doors of the gym in a uncharacteristically feminine dress *waiting* for Mike's attention. She's out in the middle of the floor, dancing to an upbeat pop song with whom Mike can only assume is her date, some random popular follower named James that probably *paid* Eleven to be his date so that he could freak out his overbearing, overprotective mother. At least that's the story Mike constructs in his head as he walks across the floor, pretending not to notice her.

It's been a long five years. Jane and Mike had gone from best to estranged friends; at some point, Jane decided the rebellious companionship of Kali Prasad and Axel Whatever-His-Last-Name-Is superseded that of The Party; she traded in game boards for her softball bat and the signature number *11* that read across her back as she sped around home plate, game after game after game. Even when Eleven and Mike encountered each other around the high school hallways, they didn't interact much. He might offer her an awkward smile once in a while if he's feeling particularly vulnerable but otherwise, they go without acknowledging the other's presence.

Their moratorium briefly ended, though, when Eleven was desperate to pass chemistry (she was the only senior girl in the class) and resorted to the intellect and guidance of her former friend. He was just nice enough to say yes, and to meet her every Thursday during the fall season when Eleven wasn't required to attend her regular practices. It didn't take long for the two to digress from balancing chemical equations to recalling the summer nights and sleepovers they spent with The Party; the nights in which manhunt was deemed the game of choice by all members except Will (he was never a real fan of the dark). There was also the spoiled memories of Mike's familial life that shadowed the recollection of their younger days. Days that were spent playing on the Hawkins Elementary jungle gym, followed by nights in which Mike phoned the chief's house ("can I talk to Jane, please?") so he could tell her what toxic exchanged occurred between Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler that evening. Mike would eventually confess *everything* to El, desperately calling her one night in the midst of their tutorial sessions so that he could drop the ultimate bomb – Ted Wheeler finally left, and he wasn't coming back.

Despite the rekindling of their former friendship there was still an obvious distance between them; they didn't recognize each other in the hallway, they spent time in secret at the Hawkins Library (or drunkenly wandering Maple Street, as Mike swiped Ted's prized bottle of Johnnie Walker after he left, not caring whether he'd return for it). And despite everything, every unanswered question, every moment left lingering without closure, Mike found himself attached to her. He was, after all, his best friend and first crush, although Mike would likely never admit the latter.

The cloud of nostalgia dissipates when Dustin brings Mike back to reality. "Can you *believe* the look Stacy is giving me right now? She so wants me to ask her to dance."

"Good luck," Mike snarks, offering his friend a bit of a smile, fairly confident Dustin's request would be denied. Then again, it *had* been four years since middle school, and if Sloane's taste in men was any indication of that of the popular clique, Stacy would be all over Dustin.

The music begins to slow to something generic and unrecognizable; something mellow with a synth beat that was probably on the top of the charts, but Mike doesn't know it; he doesn't really follow popular music the way most kids do. He doesn't realize Sloane is about to ask him to dance before Mike turns to The Party, "excuse me," he says politely, nervously making his way to the middle of the dance floor.

"Can I cut in?" Mike asks, directing the question in James's direction, but Eleven is clearly more affected by it. Her cheeks nearly match the shade of her red heels, and Mike notices it, wondering if his own expression mirrors the color. James mumbles something Mike can't quite make out, but the other boy saunters away, allowing Mike to make his move. Eleven whispers his name without realizing and Mike pretends not to notice. It's jarring how seamlessly her hands seem to fall over his shoulders, how his hands naturally find her waist and they just *know how to dance* despite not having any prior experience whatsoever. It's not as hard as it looks, not really, Mike decides; maintaining composure proves to be much more challenging a feat.

"Hi," he greets her, rather foolishly, "Hi," she mimics him a bit, her smile authentic. Mike missed that smile. He's not sure how to lead the

conversation next. *I missed you this year, El, and I'm going to miss you next year when I go to college. Truth be told, I'm probably going to miss you for the rest of my life.*

There really isn't much they *can* say, not in the middle of the dance floor. Maybe if they get another moment alone, maybe on the off-chance El fails chemistry *again* and needs a tutor for summer school. They don't exchange much more, and Mike can't decide if he wants it that way. The song is sweet and short and at its close they drop their hands at their sides, his grasp lingering on her's for probably a moment too long, but he can't help himself. "I just wanted to say you look beautiful tonight."

The blush doesn't recede from her features as she murmurs a soft "thank you," watching Mike turn to leave, making his way back to the spot against the wall in which The Party was situated. Mike can already hear the questions and demands from the rest of them: you asked *Eleven Hopper* to dance!? Are you drunk? And Mike's prepared to jokingly respond, yes, and hope the questions cease because he doesn't really feel like explaining his actions to anyone.

He just wanted one dance with his best friend.

feedback appreciated; thank you for taking the time to read this xx

2. el

I decided to add on to this, not sure if I'll add more besides this, but here you go, for those who are interested :)

As much as she wanted to forget, Eleven remembered it clearly.

Her first kiss was one of her more formative moments. They were on the swings, not really moving anywhere, just kicking their feet around in the dirt beneath them. She recalled the way she asked him – *nervously*, "Do you know what the big deal is about kissing? I overheard my dad talking to Will's mom about it. I don't *understand* it."

Mike shrugged his shoulders, "I'm pretty sure Nancy has," he responded, "but I don't get the big deal, either."

The one thing Eleven couldn't recount correctly was *who* initiated it. She brought it up, so Eleven imagined it was *she*, after all. But she also could picture the dusty rose hues that graced Mike's freckles as he stumbled over his words, fidgeting with his hands, before she felt his digits wrap around hers. And then it was a short, yet electrifying moment, puckered lips meeting for maybe a moment too long because *then* Eleven remembered the pitchy voice of Dustin's shrieks over the playground:

"Lucas, get over here! Mike and Jane are *kissing*!"

The next kiss was one that Eleven *had* forgotten about, to an extent. That was until tutoring began, and El was reminded of their former friendship, tightly knotted ties that had eventually become frayed and severed, of predominately her doing. The Second Kiss had taken place the summer before their fallout, although neither of them realized it, in the moment.

Manhunt was The Party's game of choice, especially during the warmer months; the days lasted longer and curfews weren't as strict and there were actually some pretty decent hiding places between Maple and Cherry, so the to-be eighth graders took advantage of any

clear night they could get.

"Mike!" Jane whispered loudly as she felt a foot stomp on top of hers, "can you please watch where you're going? You're going to get us found out. You're too tall for this!" It was *true*, the younger Wheeler had experienced a significant growth spurt and now towered a bit over his friends, most noticeably, *her*.

Mike sat on the dirt beneath them, concealing himself in the branches of the bush. "Sorry," he apologized sheepishly, "but to be fair, it was kinda hard to see you."

"Ha *ha*. You're hilarious."

She sat beside him, feeling her fingers accidentally dart over his and *damn it* that sent something through her that she didn't quite understand. Something exciting, yet sort of scary, and *completely* anxiety-inducing.

The darkness of night was illuminated by the full moon above them, the sky taking on a color that was not quite gray, not quite purple, but something in between. They had been sitting together for maybe seven or eight minutes, talking about how Lucas had likely found *no one* and that Will would be the last to be found, considering his stature and talent for finding prime hiding places.

It wasn't until she turned to *look at him* – why was looking him in the eye so damn *hard*? – that Jane felt her stomach knot. She realized they were sitting *close together* behind a row of small bushes that barely concealed them; she heard chatter of their friends from yards away but chose to ignore it because there was something about the way their eyes met that pulled her in like a magnet. Their hands were touching again, but this time, it wasn't an accident.

"Hey," he murmured, "you look..."

She didn't let him finish his sentence, but the kiss said it all. This time, it was still shy, but less so. They had gained confidence over the course of seven years; it was almost as if they knew what to do; Jane had certainly seen enough *Days of Our Lives* to know that the best part of the kiss was the anticipation. And damn, did the anticipation

sort of slay her, but excitingly so. She could feel the moment leading up to it, their faces drawing in closer and the *look in his eyes* and shit, she was falling hard for her best friend.

They pulled back before they could be found together, Jane giving up her position because she couldn't just *sit there* with feelings she couldn't figure out. She remembered pulling away, stuttering something unbecoming that wasn't even a legitimate *word* and then giving away her position. "Uh, uh, Lucas!" she jumped out of the bushes, standing on her feet again, "I've been here the whole time!"

Maybe it was her unresolved feelings that pushed her away from him, or just that her interests were taking her in different directions, or that Kali and Axel were *different* and neither of them were tall nerds with thick reading glasses and an aptitude for audiovisuals and club leadership.

Her name was traded in for a number, thick liner and mascara adorned her eyes and she hadn't played hide and seek since.

So, it hardly makes any sense to El that she recalled her first two kisses while dancing with her former manhunt partner. Perhaps it's the nostalgia of her elementary and middle school years, with the looming graduation and subsequent entrance to The Real World. Or maybe it's the look in his eyes that reminds her of that summer night; the lights dim on the floor that *set the mood* – whatever mood *that* was.

Was it bad that Eleven fought the urge to kiss him a fourth time?

He *was* there with a date, and she's standing against the wall with the remaining members of The Party, El notes. And James is floating around the gymnasium somewhere, to be perfectly honest; El doesn't really care where he is because he's not exactly catching her interest.

The dance ends. He calls her beautiful, he walks away, backwards at first, waving a hand at her slightly as part of his exit. Her brows rise above her eyes slightly, wondering *what the hell that was* but not wanting to trade the experience for an instant. They've already had a second kiss, maybe they can have a second dance.

Feedback appreciated; thank you for taking the time to read this! xx